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ABSTRACT

This document describes the experiences of 13 unemployed adults who participated in job training that was provided by the Croydon Continuing Education and Training Service in the London borough of Croydon with funding from the European Social Fund from 1995-1997. The document begins with an overview of the two projects: the New Addington NOW (New Opportunities for Women) project, which provided job training to 302 single parents who had been unemployed for more than a year, and the Thornton Heath/South Norwood Horizon project, which provided English-as-a-second-language and job training courses to 1,890 unemployed refugees and ethnic minorities to develop fluency in English and gain job skills. In the next three sections, trainees' own words are used to describe the following: trainees' backgrounds and the motives and circumstances behind their choice of courses; trainees' progress and factors that helped or hindered their training; and trainees' activities after completing their courses. Each of these sections ends with a list of good practices that facilitated trainees' success in their courses. Concluding the document are a model detailing progression routes and support systems for effective training programs and the trainees' recommendations for development and delivery of short-term job training programs for disadvantaged individuals. (MN)



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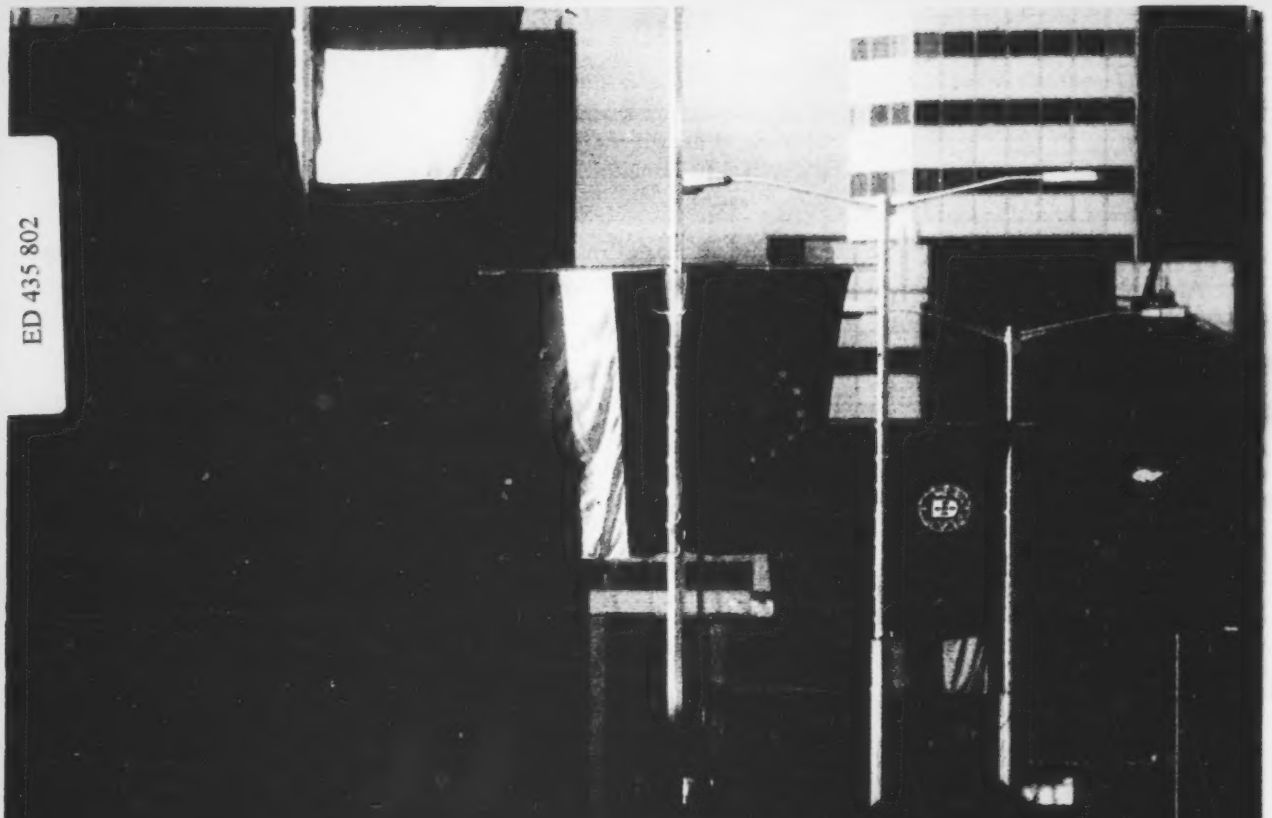

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# Foundations for Choice

## Good Practice in Adult Training

drawn from the experiences of trainees

Croydon Continuing Education & Training Service and the European Social Fund Community Initiative Programme

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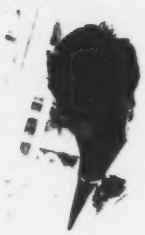
CONTINUING EDUCATION AND TRAINING SERVICE CETS

# Foreword

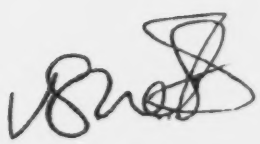
by Valerie Shawcross, Leader of Croydon Council



I am very pleased to introduce this publication *Foundations for Choice* which describes two projects run by the Croydon Continuing Education and Training Service with funding from the European Social Fund Community Initiative Programme. The aim of these projects was to support unemployed adults in gaining skills in order to progress to employment or further training.

I have visited the projects myself and have learnt from the trainees how much they have gained from their training not just in terms of finding employment but also through increased confidence and a greater ability to make choices from a range of options. This publication aims to give a flavour of the projects through the views of individual trainees; it is based on taped interviews with 13 trainees who represent the range of courses and the support services offered. These trainees describe in their own words their experiences and feelings before, during and after the project and from their perceptions a list of good practice in training and also recommendations for the future have been drawn out.

I hope you will enjoy reading about the experiences of these trainees as much as I did and also that you will learn from their perceptions. I recommend this publication not only to those responsible for funding, planning and delivering training courses but to all of us who have an interest in the education of adults.



**Councillor Valerie Shawcross**
**Leader, Croydon Council**

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## We would like to thank:

All the staff and trainees who have worked together to make these two projects a success, Ben Gerber who took the photographs and especially the trainees who have contributed to this publication:

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Steve Gadsby
Zuzi Leru

**Mary Simpson & Joanna Lane**
**Croydon CETS, April 1998**

# Introduction to the Projects

## Aims

The aim of this publication is to give a flavour of the experiences of 13 trainees on two projects run from 1995 to 1997 by the Croydon Continuing Education and Training Service (CETS) with funding from the European Social Fund (ESF) Community Initiative Programme. From the experiences of these trainees a list of good practice has been drawn out which highlights the factors that helped or hindered them in their training and progress towards work.

The 13 trainees were selected for interview to cover the range of courses on offer and also give a positive perspective covering feelings and perceptions about their training. Their own words have been used as far as possible, including some colourful turns of phrase which express individuality. The aim is not to try and give an objective account of all trainees' views on the project - this would be impossible given the large numbers particularly on the Thornton Heath / South Norwood Horizon Project - but to give an insight into the subjective accounts of some individuals. This introduction will describe the two projects and give a brief breakdown of the total numbers of trainees involved and their achievements in order to put the stories that follow into context.

## The areas

Two areas of Croydon have been identified as suffering from a high level of economic and social deprivation: New Addington on the edge of the borough and the area around Thornton Heath in the north.

The New Addington estate is a sprawling council development built some way out of Croydon. Geographically isolated and with poor public transport facilities, the spacious streets and green surroundings mask a highly disadvantaged community. Unemployment rates in New Addington are higher than the average figure for Croydon (see Figure 1 on page 6) and a large number of those unemployed have been out of work for over two years. A report, *Health in Croydon*[1], highlighted the differences in health between different parts of the borough and the particular needs of the Fieldway / New Addington areas where there are high levels of poverty and poor health including drug and alcohol dependency. A survey of young mothers in New Addington, carried out in 1993 following concerns about higher levels of teenage motherhood and social deprivation than in the rest of Croydon, revealed about 35% of these young mothers were depressed (about double the expected rate).

**'The spacious streets and green surroundings mask a highly disadvantaged community'**

The area around Thornton Heath is densely populated with a high unemployment rate and ethnic minority population (27- 44% compared to about 17% for the Croydon population as a whole[2]). Figure 1 shows that unemployment rates in Thornton Heath and neighbouring wards are as high as in New Addington and Fieldway.

A large number of refugees, many of whom have a first language other than English, have recently arrived in the borough. There are particularly high levels of unemployment among refugees [3].

The *Health in Croydon* report identified Thornton Heath and neighbouring Broad Green, in addition to New Addington, as areas where the population has a higher incidence of poor health than in the rest of the borough.

[1] *Health in Croydon*, Croydon Health Commissioning Agency, October 1993

[2] Census 1991

[3] *SOLOTEC English as a Second Language*, 1997

## The training

CETS was successful in its application to the ESF to fund two projects to combat disadvantage in these two areas of the borough. Both projects were linked with partners in Europe working in similar fields. Premises were found in a secondary school in New Addington and in adult education centres in Thornton Heath and South Norwood. Over the three years of the projects, a range of new courses was developed. These courses were free for all trainees, and included childcare funding to enable those with young children to attend.

**The New Addington NOW project**

This project, run under the New Opportunities for Women (NOW) programme, was aimed at single parents and those unemployed for over a year who wanted to gain skills to find work. A survey [4] highlighted catering as one of the fastest growing occupations in the area. As a result a training package was designed, based around catering and a basic introduction to information technology, with guidance, counselling and support in job search. A pilot project was run successfully which showed the potential to develop it further.

[4] *SOLOTEC Labour Market and Economic Report, 1994*

**Figure 1**
**Unemployment by ward in Croydon December 1997**

**Source: Office for National Statistics (Crown Copyright)**

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*Training courses*

As a result of ESF funding it was possible to expand and offer a greater variety of training. In addition to training in catering accredited through the Royal Society of Arts (RSA) Practical Skills Profile, a catering enterprise scheme was developed where trainees developed more advanced skills including costing, bulk cooking, marketing, team building and meeting deadlines. Care training, including emergency first aid, safety in the home, relaxing and managing stress, was also introduced where trainees developed skills to work with a wide range of age groups from the very young to the very old.

Information technology training was developed to offer the higher level Certificate in Information Technology accredited by Cambridge University, in addition to the basic level RSA Computer Literacy and Information Technology (CLAIT). A small telecentre was installed where trainees were able to develop IT skills further, by offering business services to the local community. For example, trainees in the telecentre produced the New Addington community newsletter and other publicity material for customers. Teacher training in information technology and catering was also developed, where trainees worked as teaching assistants and also studied for the Certificate in Education.

*Further support - barrier busters*

Where lack of English and Maths proved a barrier for trainees to complete courses, extra support was provided. Support in jobsearch was also offered, but it soon became clear that it wasn't just a question of teaching trainees how to write a CV, fill in an application form and develop interview skills. There was a whole range of other barriers that needed to be addressed - family issues, health and drug problems, low esteem and previous negative experiences. 'Barrier busters' were introduced for all trainees as a positive way of sharing experiences, and a motivator to look forward to a future where work and further training were a real possibility. Only then were trainees able to approach jobsearch in a positive rather than a negative frame of mind.

*The trainees*

During the three years of the Project 302 trainees participated in the range of courses offered. Figures 2 and 3 show the ethnic origin and age groups of the 162 trainees in Year 3 of the Project. They were all women apart from one man. Figure 4 shows the number of these trainees who progressed to employment, self-employment, voluntary work or further training during Year 3.

**Figure 2 Ethnic origin of trainees**

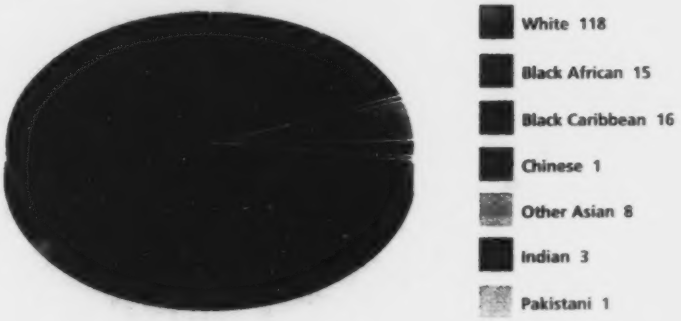
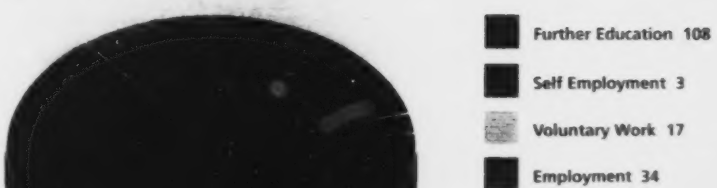



**Figure 3 Ages**

**Figure 4 Progression destinations**




**The Thornton Heath / South Norwood Horizon project**

This project, run under the Horizon programme, was aimed at unemployed refugees and other members of minority ethnic communities who wanted to develop fluency in English and also gain skills to find work. The project was based on the premise that fluency in more than one language is an important asset and that it is possible to build on this bilingualism to develop skills for work.

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## Thornton Heath/ South Norwood Horizon project

**Figure 5 Ethnic origin**

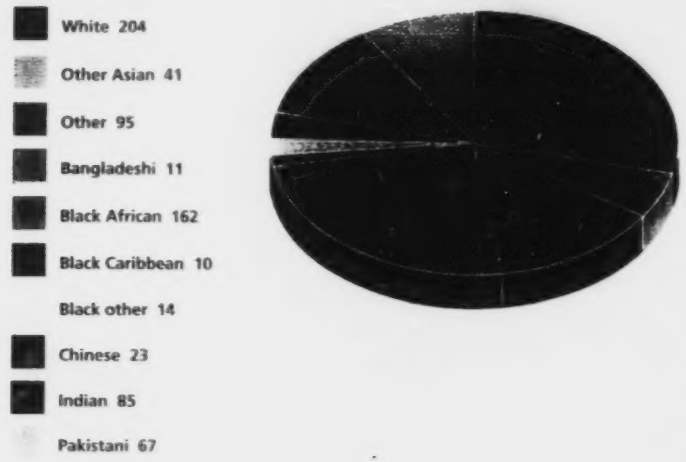
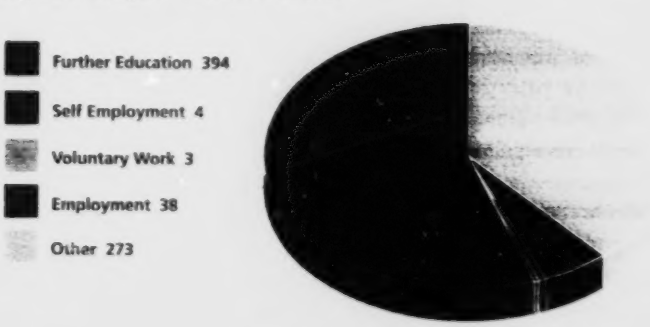



**Figure 6 Ages**

**Figure 7 Progression destinations**




*Training courses*

Training in English for Speakers of other languages (ESOL) was offered at seven levels ranging from complete beginner to advanced level.

In addition, training courses were offered in community interpreting, bilingual counselling and advice work, childcare, business start-up and training for bilingual classroom assistants in multicultural schools - all areas where trainees could build on their own knowledge of languages and cultures other than English and where research had revealed there was a real prospect of employment.

The interpreting, counselling and advice courses were accredited by the London Open College Federation (LOCF), the childcare course through the Pre-School Learning Alliance Diploma in Pre-School Practice and the classroom assistants' course through the RSA Certificate for Bilingual Classroom Assistants in Multicultural Schools.

*Further support*

Careful screening at initial assessment to assess prior learning and experience as well as language ensured that trainees were allocated to the appropriate course. Once on course trainees were able to supplement their learning in these classes by attending an open learning centre to develop English, Maths and study skills. Teachers supported trainees to plan and follow a programme of learning using the wide range of resources including computer assisted learning, tapes and videos as well as books and worksheets.

Advice on applying for jobs and courses was an integral part of the project, as trainees had to learn about the complexities of the jobsearch process in Britain which in most cases was completely different from the system in their own countries. They also had to be able to find their way through the maze of further education opportunities and qualifications on offer in Britain. Trainees were individually interviewed to draw up action plans according to their particular needs, and group sessions on jobsearch and training opportunities were offered. A bank of useful resources was built up, including details of all courses in the UK and information on equivalences of qualifications between the UK and other countries.

*The trainees*

During the three years of the project a total of 1890 trainees took part in courses. Figures 5 and 6 show the ethnic breakdown and ages of the 712 participants in Year 3. Of these, 491 were female and 221 male. Figure 7 shows the destinations of trainees in Year 3.

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# Getting Started

## Trainees describe their background, and the motives and circumstances behind their choice of course

### Catering course

**Caroline**

I was on my own with my daughter. I was going through a very rough patch in my life. I didn't believe I could go anywhere or do anything and just by chance I saw a poster at my daughter's playgroup about the catering course.

I was a sales secretary - that was my first job after leaving school. After I had my daughter I couldn't get employment. I did little bits of part-time work. I had some qualifications but not anything that could get you a job. I had 'O' level Law, but no Maths and English. I was going through post-natal depression, and a member of my family had died. I just didn't do anything till I started here.

I felt very scared when I came here first. Not being on a course for so many years, it's hard to walk into a centre where you don't know anyone. They said to me 'Why do you want to do this course?' and I thought, 'If I don't do this course, I probably won't be alive next week. If I don't get myself back on my feet I won't be anywhere.'

I wanted to learn new skills and I'd got to the point where I wasn't cooking properly for my daughter. Starting here brought us closer together. It gave me more confidence and that was what kept me here. It was more than the catering course. It was the way they made me feel, like I was somebody, very positive about myself.

**Steve**

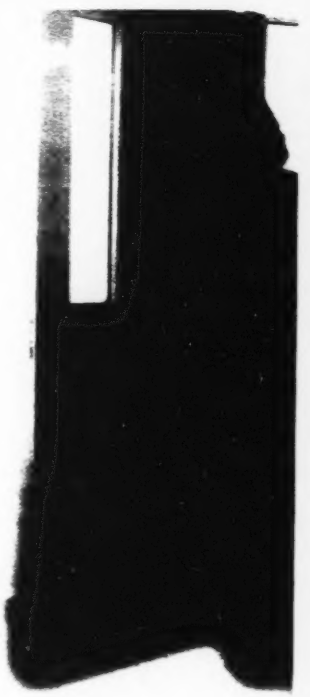
I was working as a chef but I lost my job. I've done lots of different jobs. I was last at the Horseshoe Tavern, but then I was unemployed and couldn't get a job. It used to be easier to get work - you didn't need a qualification. But now they ask for qualifications. I went down the Job Centre and they sent me up here and I had a bit of a chat and then started.

I felt OK but I'd never done any other training courses, it was a bit of a step. There was only one other man on the course. He was on the course before me, so I wasn't with him much. But I knew a couple of the women anyway. I got to know them all quite quickly.

**Anne**

I'm a mother of four. I was in a rocky marriage, my last child was in full-time school and I wanted to get out of the house. I always loved cooking. I used to work for Nestlé before I had my second child, that was about seven years ago. My friend Caroline told me about the course. She had been there and came round with a leaflet in her hand.

The first day I felt shock, horror, because I realised there had been lots of changes since I'd last worked. Thirteen years ago when I got a job we didn't need a hygiene certificate. Being at home with children is quite different from being with adults. It was a break with everything. It made me feel, 'Yes, I am me.'



**'It's hard to walk into a centre where you don't know anyone'**

### English courses

**Shpetim**

I am 18. In my country, Yugoslavia, I finished secondary school and studied for two years at a private school to become a mechanic. I did not learn any English. I came from Yugoslavia nine months ago as a refugee leaving my family behind, because there are a lot of problems in my country. I can't go back there now, but I am in touch with my family, I telephone them and write to them.

When I came here I tried to get into Croydon College but there was no room, so then I tried Carshalton College but they wouldn't take me because I couldn't write English. Then I heard from a friend about this Level Two course at Thornton Heath, and I hoped I could learn to write.

**Emma**

I came here from Burma in 1991 with my husband and four children. I was married at 16 and never really had any education. We lived in a large house and I used to look after children when their parents went to work. Many people in Burma are very poor and they couldn't afford to pay me, but I enjoyed it and it was company for my children. Sometimes I was looking after about 25 children on my own.

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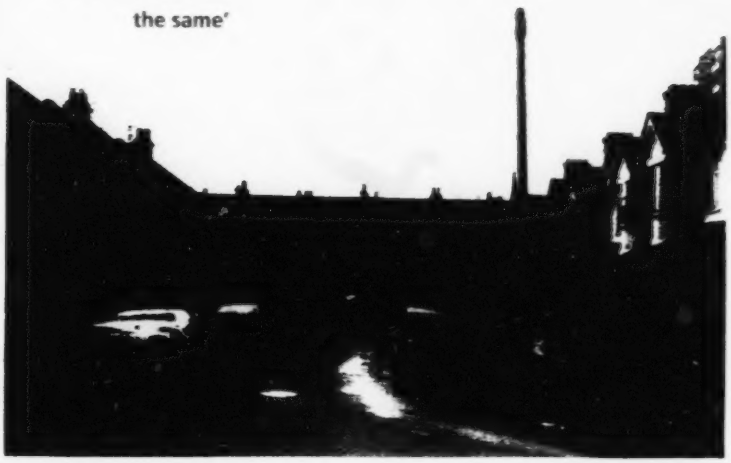
My husband is English and my children learnt English in Burma - it was only me who couldn't speak any English. My health visitor told me about classes and a friend took me for an interview. I was so scared. I was given something to write and the person interviewing me said my friend mustn't help me because they wanted to check the correct level for me. I just prayed to God for help to write some English.

At that time I wanted to get a job, but I knew I couldn't get one until my English improved. I didn't know how to apply for a job in Britain, but people told me you had to have experience and qualifications. I knew I had to study first.

My husband works during the day so he couldn't take me to classes. He showed me the way and I got there all right, but on the way back I got terribly lost. All the houses and streets looked the same and I just cried and cried. I laughed with my children afterwards, but I'll never forget how scared I felt.

I didn't want to go through the doors of the centre on the first day, but I saw a lot of foreigners like me and I felt a bit better. When my teacher came into the class I thought he was a student because he looked like us (he was young and came from Bulgaria). I moved up to give him a seat and then realised he was our teacher. All the teachers are friendly and helpful - not like teachers, but more like friends, sisters, brothers. If the teacher is far from the students it's going to take us longer to learn. Any time we need help we can ask them - tea time, private time, they don't mind.

**'All the houses and streets looked the same'**



**'not like teachers, more like friends, sisters, brothers'**

## Computer course

**Annmarie**

I used to work as a psychiatric nurse but that was 12 years ago. I had my three children and now they're at school, so it's possible to return to work within limits. But I knew that any kind of work now would involve some sort of computing knowledge, even nursing, which I don't want to do because of the hours.

Before I came on the course I wouldn't touch a computer. We had one at home but I didn't see any reason to use it. I was a real technophobe.

I found out about the training from a friend who had seen a leaflet but didn't want to go alone. There was a group of about six of us who came together, backing one another up to go through the door. I couldn't see the point of it, didn't want to start and I was terrified of doing something wrong, making a mistake. I'm in my mid-40s and to start something new is daunting. I didn't think I could cope.

We came in and applied together and just came straight onto the basic course as we all had no experience. On the first day I felt so frightened. There was this object, the computer, which I couldn't understand and it was like learning a new language, trying to understand new terms. But everybody was in the same boat, and we got round the table right at the beginning and talked about our reasons for joining the course. Everybody had the same fear, and you weren't starting alone with that fear. We were taken through it step by step and learnt the computer will ask you questions, it won't just leap at your command. It asks, 'Do you want to save?' and that puts your fear into perspective. Being faced with so many computer terms at once didn't help - the tutor said you've got to get used to them, but I have to understand where they are coming from in the first place. I didn't want the terms repeated, I wanted them explained simply. Once that had been got over it was easier to understand.

It's important to me that the centre is in New Addington where I live. If I had to travel to Croydon I couldn't do it. I'd be an hour travelling. And the hours fit in with my children's. I can do the training and still be there to collect my children - I hate to leave them.

Everyone here is very open and friendly. Straight away when you walk in someone says 'hello,' and there's an offer of a cup of tea or a moan if the urn's not on.

## Interpreters' course

**Martin**

I came to this country from Hong Kong a long time ago, in the 70s. I did my A-levels here and got a diploma in catering. Then I went back to Hong Kong to work in various jobs, as a community worker for a hospital and then in jewellery sales. I was in jewellery sales for several years and did well, but the shop I worked for went bankrupt, so I decided to come back to the UK and settle down with my family. I worked as a laboratory technician, then as a cook in a hospital, and then I was an insurance salesman. I've done a variety of jobs. Most recently I was a community worker for a Vietnamese organisation in Deptford, but the project finished and I was left unemployed. I decided to do the interpreters' course because it would be a career change. I did a counselling course at the same time.

I learnt about the course from a library. I applied in 1995 but the course was full, so I did a business start-up course while I was waiting, and re-applied in 1996. I hesitated a bit before I went for the initial interview because it was a lengthy course, a whole year, and I wondered what I would be learning. I also worried about the commitment - what would happen if I found a job and had to drop out of the course? But the course co-ordinator reassured me that if this happened, and if I told her beforehand, I could rejoin the course later.

**Blanca**

I came from Colombia in 1995 as a refugee. My mother tongue is Spanish. I studied administration and information technology at university. We learnt English at school but I never spoke it, so when I came here it was the first time. I knew nobody, I was alone, and I tried to do everything myself: read letters, find a solicitor, communicate with people and so on. At the same time I learnt English from TV and radio, and I made English friends at the bed and breakfast hotel where I lived for the first 18 months. I think life pushed me to communicate! There were another seven Spanish speakers at my hotel who couldn't even say 'hello,' so I was able to use my experience to help them. That was what first got me interested in doing an interpreters' course.

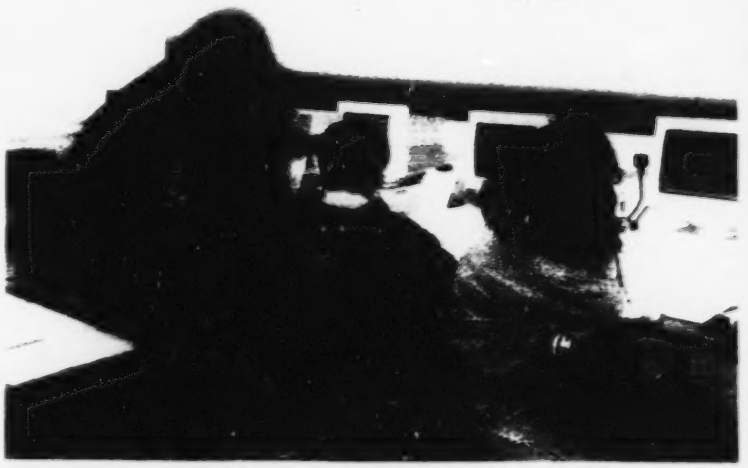
I heard about the course because it was advertised at the Thornton Heath Centre where I was already doing Level Two English classes. I felt 'This is what I want to do, I need to do this course.' I was nervous at the interview because it was a high level course and my English was not good enough, but Cristina reassured me that my English would improve as I went along.

**Juvelina**

I come from the Cape Verde Islands, off the coast of West Africa, and I speak Creole, French, Portuguese and some Spanish and English. I came here in 1993. I had been living in France for nearly ten years and came here to improve my English because I wanted to go to Canada eventually. But then I got married, so now I'm here for a while!

A friend found out about English classes from the CETS guide, and three months after I arrived I enrolled. My writing was much better than my speaking. The following year I did the Pitman's Higher Intermediate English exam and Cambridge First Certificate. I wanted to try the Pitman's Advanced level but when my daughter was born I couldn't study.

**'We were taken through it step by step'**



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**'I was a bit nervous at the interview... but she was so friendly'**

When she was a year old I decided to do the interpreters' course. I was already doing some interpreting for the Refugee Project and translation for the Red Cross, so I thought if I did the course I could learn techniques and do it as a profession. Cheryl, who was working in careers guidance, told me about the course. The interview was good - because Cristina is a very nice person, you feel comfortable. I wasn't sure they'd accept me because I had a small child and if she'd been ill I might have missed some of the course.

## Bilingual Assistants' course

**Satinder**

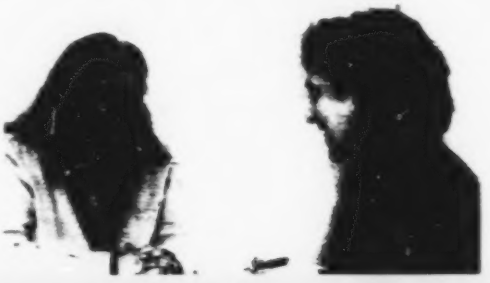
I did my education back home in India. I did an MA in Political Science and then a teacher's degree, and moved to this country in 1984. At that time my eldest daughter was only two so I didn't try for work, I thought I'd better concentrate on bringing up my family. I had two more children, my youngest is at school now, so I decided to start looking for a job. I thought I'd better do some refresher course first so I contacted the Citizens' Advice Bureau, and one of the ladies there knew about the Croydon Adult Learners' Advice Centre and I had an interview. I said I wanted to work with children and that I used to teach back home. My interviewer discovered that my educational qualifications were equivalent to a first degree over here, but in order to be a full-time teacher I'd have to go for another degree. This was impossible with a family to look after, so I asked if there was something else I could do, like being an assistant, if possible helping children whose first language wasn't English. She made a few suggestions, and on my way home I enquired at Thornton Heath Centre whether they were doing any courses for bilingual people, to do with language. She said yes, they were planning to start a bilingual assistants' course, and asked me to leave my telephone number. Six months later they rang me up.

I was a bit nervous at the interview, whether I would be accepted, but everything went well, it was brilliant, she was so friendly, they just wanted to know how good you were at English, and whether you were capable of completing the course, because sometimes you start because you're so excited and then you just leave halfway through.

**Maria**

I come from the Canary Islands and my mother tongue is Spanish. I worked in a travel agency there for ten years, and then I decided I wanted to learn English. I came here in April 1993. My first contact with CETS was an interview with Saroj who told me all the courses were full until September. So I filled in time by taking an English course at Croydon College, and then started English classes at the Thornton Heath Centre in the autumn, moving up a class after Christmas. Then a friend advised me to do the NVQ Administration course, but I realised after a month that it was not right for me, because the course was just repeating what I already knew from my travel agency experience, and what I needed was help with speaking English. So my careers adviser suggested a more advanced English course, which I did, and I passed my Pitman Intermediate. In 1995 I trained as a volunteer and worked with the beginners' class. And while I was doing the volunteers' course I saw the bilingual assistants' course advertised at the centre.

I wanted to be a teacher so I asked Cheryl, my adviser, about the course and she said she thought I would be fine. Maybe I would have problems with my English, but my bilingual experience would offset that. I'd done A-level Spanish at Selhurst College, and halfway through the teacher said 'I don't need to teach you Spanish, but if you can help me, I'll give you some extra time in English because that is your main problem' so I was her assistant for the rest of the year.



**'I wondered what it was.' Thornton Heath Centre on the fourth floor of Ambassador House**

The bilingual assistants' course was to teach children. I was clear in my mind that I really wanted to work with adults, but I thought the course would be a good foundation for me and I could move to another field later. So at the interview I talked about my experience as a children's nurse and how I *loved* children, but my really deep idea was and still is to work with adults! They probably had some doubts about me, but in the end they accepted me.

## Pre-School Childcare course

**Zuzi**

I came here on business from Roumania in October 1994, but after I left my family had a lot of telephone calls about me from government officials and I was afraid to go back. A solicitor advised me to speak to the Home Office, and I was granted asylum. I started to learn English in September 1995. I hadn't studied English before, I just knew Russian and a little French. I went to school in Roumania for about 15 years. I did the equivalent of A-level and then I studied accountancy and computing for a year, and typing for six months. I worked as an accountant for about 20 years. I'll be 44 in August.

I cried a lot when I left Roumania; there's something wrong there, the newspapers say one thing, but the reality is different. Some very bad things happened after I left... but I don't want to talk about them. I hope all the time to feel better. I am Catholic and I pray and go to church every Sunday, and there I feel better.

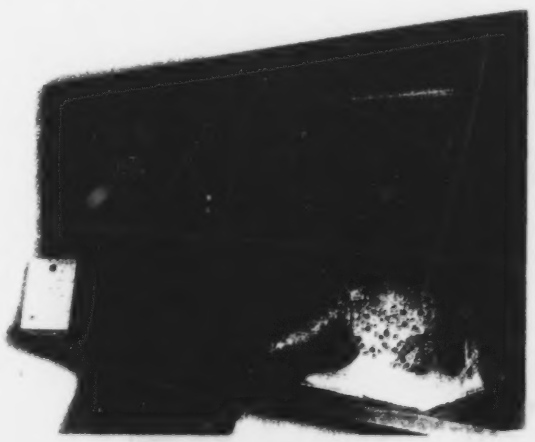
For a year I tried to teach myself English from books and television. I used to walk a lot and write down all the names of the streets. One day I was in Tesco's at Thornton Heath with a Roumanian friend and her husband and I saw the sign 'Ambassador House.' I wondered what it was and my friend's husband asked the cashier, who said it was an adult education centre! We went there to enquire about English classes. I enrolled there on an intensive English course in September 1995 and went there every day, and in July 1996 I passed Pitman Elementary and Intermediate exams.

Cheryl told me about the childcare course. I had had an accident in Roumania which meant I couldn't have a child. At the time I was terribly upset and wanted to do a childcare course so that at least I could work with children, but in Roumania these courses last five years and are only for young people. I could hardly believe it when they said at Ambassador House 'Don't worry, Zuzi, if you want to work with children you can.' Ellen, the course co-ordinator, and Cheryl asked me some questions, like whether I was sure I wanted to work with children because you need a lot of patience, not just with the children but with the parents, and it's hard work, but I wasn't worried about all that.

## Business Start-up course

**Amal**

I came from Ethiopia in 1990 as a refugee with my four children. When I first arrived I lived in a bed and breakfast hostel in Sutton with two other people from my country. The social worker took us to a school to study English and paid for the crèche for three months, but the classes were only four hours a week. The first term I felt I could learn, but then half my family died in Ethiopia: my sister, my mother, and two cousins. I still went to classes but I couldn't learn, I spent two or three years like that. Then a friend told me about classes at Thornton Heath which were held every day, and when my son started school full time I went there, but there were so many people, time ran out while you waited for the teacher to come and explain.



**'I enquired at Thornton Heath Centre'**

**'Conduct tests in as relaxed a way as possible'**

I couldn't learn quickly. If you sit with people who speak good English you copy what they say, but there all the people were from my country and spoke no English, and everyone spoke in their own way and I picked up a lot of mistakes. Writing was hard for me, too, because I was brought up in a village in my country and never had any education. But last year, I thought, 'I've been here so long without learning anything,' and I decided to make an effort, and I felt at last I knew what I was doing.

I decided I wanted to open a coffee shop on the estate where I live, in one of the shops which have closed down. I didn't want this just as a business, but to help the people on the estate to be friendly with each other. When people talk about Roundshaw they think 'Ah, it's a bad place and bad people,' but they're not bad people, they just don't have a chance to be friends with each other. I thought if I opened a shop they could come in and relax with each other and become a community. But the Council refused to rent me a shop. A friend advised me to do a business course first.
My teacher told me about the business course at Thornton Heath, so I had an interview. I wasn't afraid at the interview. Interviews are always fine for me, it's just that actually doing things isn't fine!

**'There were so many people, time ran out while you waited for the teacher to come and explain'**

## Good Practice

- ★ **Publicise courses widely eg in playgroups and libraries - build up links with other agencies, eg health visitors, social workers, job centres**
- ★ **Recognise the important role friends and other trainees can play in supporting the first step**
- ★ **Tests can intimidate. Make sure there is a good reason for testing and the purpose of any tests is clear. Conduct in as relaxed a way as possible**
- ★ **Don't underestimate how terrified trainees can feel on the first day. It helps to see others in the same position. Recognise the importance of sharing experiences in a group**
- ★ **A close and equal relationship between teacher and adult trainee promotes self-confidence and learning**
- ★ **Ensure that the training centre is accessible and that the hours are suitable for trainees**
- ★ **Recognise that trainees may need the flexibility to leave a course and return to it later, and give reassurance at interview if necessary**
- ★ **A welcoming environment is essential to put trainees at ease**
- ★ **Teach step by step. Ensure that new terminology is explained and not introduced all at once**
- ★ **Give opportunities for practice in a supportive environment**
- ★ **Recognise many newcomers arrive in spring or summer when classes are full. Publicise summer courses widely**
- ★ **Be aware that traumatic experiences may impede learning**
- ★ **Don't underestimate how important it is to support trainees to build up self-confidence**

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# On the Project

## Trainees describe their progress and what helped or hindered their training

### Catering and Computer courses

**Caroline**
I did a term of catering and then I did basic computing. I fell in love with the computer. I could work on a computer 24 hours a day. That was where I wanted to go. I got the RSA Practical Skills Profile, the basic Food Hygiene Certificate, RSA CLAIT and the First Aid Certificate - it's a three-part exam - and now I'm a qualified First Aider.

I did jobsearch. At that time it was applications, CVs, looking in newspapers - it was really boring, not like what they do now. It's really good now and I'd love to do it. But then it put me off a bit. I went through some days when I didn't want to come here, but Brigitte was on my back saying 'You've got to come.' She would phone my house and say, 'Why aren't you here?' Apart from the jobsearch I enjoyed everything.

The teachers were always there for us. Looking back, I can see what they were doing for me. It's a whole mixture of skills, it was never just cooking every day - you got really useful information on how to budget on the money from benefits. We learnt about nutrition, diet, hygiene - catering covers such a wide area.

After that I kept carrying on and they asked me to do some voluntary work. I was a volunteer for about a year and I used to help the students to do their CVs. Some of them got jobs out of that.

**Steve**
I did the catering, hygiene and first aid and a bit of computing, but I wasn't interested in computing at all. I got the RSA Practical Skills Profile, and the Food Hygiene and the First Aid Certificate.
The course gave me what I wanted - some qualifications. That shows employers you've got more than just experience. Actually I found the course quite boring. I knew what I was doing anyway, but I carried on so it couldn't have been that bad really. There weren't any jobs around and I wanted to get away from pubs and restaurants because of the unsociable hours.

My wife's doing the course now. She wanted to get out of the house and our kids are at school. I don't think it's boring for other people who haven't done it, but I was in catering before - it's quite a good scheme for housewives. They get more knowledge about how to cook. First Aid was useful; I didn't know about that, but I haven't kept it up.

I didn't really notice any difference in my self-confidence at the start and end of the course. I'm still the same.

**'It was a whole mixture of skills, never just cooking every day'**

**Anne**
I started here for three months; then I had to stop because I had to be at home, but I started again six months later. I did the RSA Practical Skills, Food

Hygiene and First Aid. I did my CV and used computers, which I found scary. I'm still scared of them. I did Jobsearch and that was easy. If I don't get a job I don't let it get me down. I just smile and get on and start again.

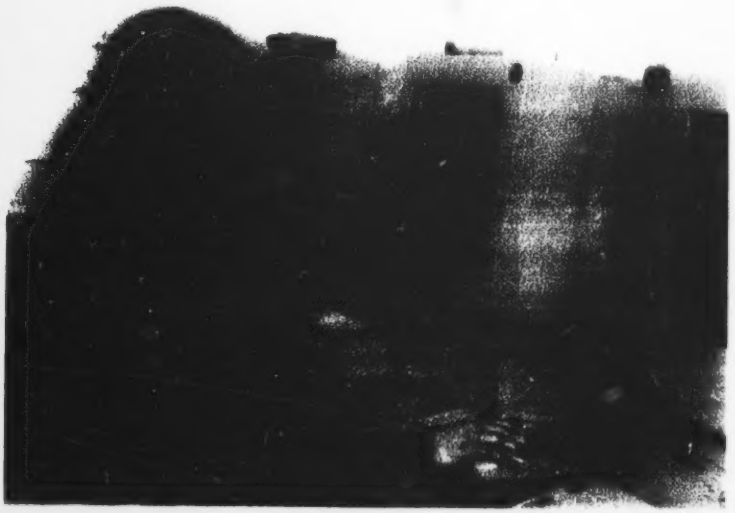
What was good was they didn't push you from one thing to another, it was step by step; they coax you into doing it. You are shown how to do it and then you do it yourself, and there's someone to support you if it goes wrong. You learn you have to remember little details and make sure you measure accurately.

**Annmarie**

First I did the RSA CLAIT and now I'm on the last two modules of the CIT and working in the telecentre. I'm on the committee for the New Addington newsletter and I've started teaching on the basic course and doing the Certificate in Education at Croydon College.

Jobsearch is built in for everybody - we call it barrier busters because it's all about being positive about the future. I've applied for jobs, and when I failed people were willing to assist me to find out why the other person got the job, but in a way that didn't put me down, so I could think positively about rejection. It's a long time since I got my last job, and now it's about understanding the application form, feeling confident about the information, that it does express all you can bring to the job. People in the project have gone over and over that. It doesn't matter how many times you write out the form, you can duplicate it as much as you like till you're comfortable with it.

**'I'm working in the telecentre'**



**'It doesn't matter how many times you fill out the form'**

If someone notices something suitable, they bring in details. We've discussed what kind of hours we could work, what childcare we would need. It's about evaluating your situation so you can use that when you go for a job.

At first we didn't understand where the course was going, where our qualifications stood us in the workplace, but now we're clearer. You start with basics which probably wouldn't get you into a job, but the next course gets you a bit further up. It's understanding when you read a job ad what skills they are talking about and where the qualifications fit in.

There was one time when a tutor wasn't as professional as I would have expected; we had some difficulty with the CIT course, but now that's been resolved and the time has been extended. People have really put themselves out to put that right. When you start a course you can be in awe of the tutor, and then when the tutor left I realised my personality had been pushed down. I didn't realise till after she left how subjugated I'd been. Now it no longer happens, I feel confident enough to go and say I'm not comfortable and know it can be resolved.

There was one person who wanted to improve her English but the leaflet was worded 'Do you want help with letters or numbers?' She said, 'I'm not a child, I want to be treated as an adult.' Now we call it English and Maths - it gives more self esteem. Everyone is very open within the basic courses. People need to know they're not the only ones, they don't stand out but are accepted. If you're having difficulty with a basic course nobody minds. I'm always saying 'My spelling is lousy. If it wasn't for spellcheck!'

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# English courses and Childcare course

**Emma**

I started in Level One English and my teacher wanted me to move quickly to Level Two, but I didn't want to. I wasn't confident and I wanted to go step by step. I started crying when I was talking to the volunteer teacher who helped in the class. She talked to my teacher and he let me stay in Level One and gave me higher level worksheets than the rest of the class. Then I did move up until I was in Level Four which is the top level class.

I did two exams: Pitman English at Basic and Elementary Level. On the exam day I was sick with nerves. My teachers gave me a glass of water and tried to get me to relax. I sat next to the open window, but when it came to the listening test we had to close it because of noise from trains and traffic outside. I really didn't want to fail those exams. I was so worried. I passed them both. It was good to take an exam to see how much we had learnt, but I was so nervous.

When I was in Level Four my friend got a part-time job for a few hours a week looking after children in a crèche attached to another centre where English classes were held. Then she became very sick and I was asked to do her job temporarily. But I didn't know about the rules in this country and I wasn't comfortable because I wasn't properly trained.

In the Level Four class I had lots of information about courses, there were so many and Cheryl kept coming to tell us about them. We asked for advice about which was right for us - a lot of students were confused.

I did the childcare course. It was hard and we didn't have enough time to write the assignments. But my teacher was so nice - just like my mother. She explained things so many times - it didn't matter how many - till I got it. We had to do 200 hours in a pre-school playgroup or nursery. It was really good - we could practise what we had learnt: like how to plan a programme, recognise if the children were weak in language, social skills, emotionally. All of us in the group needed help with English, but we got lots of help.

**'We had to do 200 hours in a pre-school playgroup or nursery'**

For me English is my third language and it's very hard for foreign students. I did have lots of help in the course, particularly with spelling and how to write the assignments, but I still needed more. I used the Guided Study Centre when I had time. It's important for teachers to plan with students so we know what we are supposed to do during these sessions. It's no good asking students to choose because we don't know what to do, and sometimes we're too afraid to ask for help.

We had a lot of support with childcare. I had someone to pick up my child one day a week from school so I could study without worrying. A lot of people here don't have family and we need that support.

**Shpetim**

When I joined the class I was nervous on the first day. I came in late because I had been seeing a solicitor and all I could say was 'I'm sorry I'm late' and nothing else!

But now my English has improved and I can write about 80% of what I can say. If you ask whether I'm happy with my progress, it's reasonable for three months in England - but I've been here for ten. My problem is I don't study hard enough at home. I have plenty of spare time, but I just go out with my friends.

**'On the exam day I was sick with nerves!**

**'With so many different backgrounds we learned from each other... we grew as a group'**

I like the course, but at my school in Yugoslavia the system was different. The teachers gave us a mark every day, and at the end of the year these marks were added up. If your marks were not good enough you had to repeat the year, otherwise you moved up to the next year. I think the Yugoslavian system is better, more exciting.

**Zuzi**

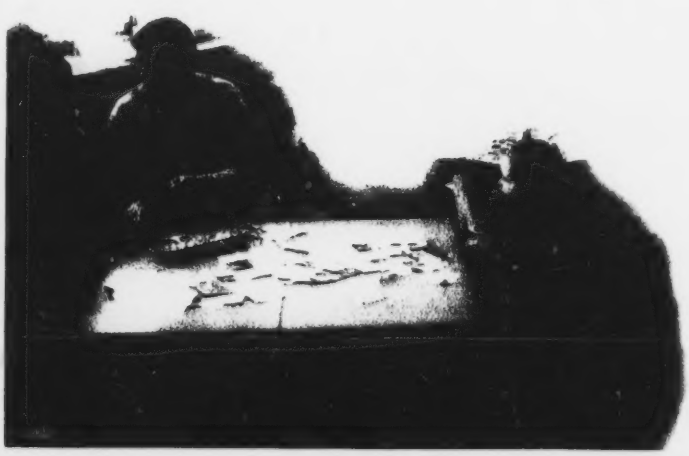
My course was for a Diploma in Pre-School Learning Practice. I did a work placement at a Montessori nursery, I had to do a child study on a little girl. Twice a week I wrote a report on her and talked to the parents. It took me two months to settle down at the nursery, to get to know the children and the teachers.

The course was fine. On the first day Ellen asked me how long I'd been here, which was just a year, so I said 'I think I'm older in my age, but younger in my English!' I thought, oh, my God, this lady came here ten years ago, this lady 15 years ago, but Ellen said 'Don't worry, Zuzi, you'll see, you'll be better than the others.' Ah no, I thought, but sometimes when we had spelling tests my English was better than theirs!

We had two hours of individual guidance every Wednesday from the teachers, and Ellen especially often spent extra hours helping us.

As an optional extra, we could have two hours a week on the computer. I did this, but not everyone chose to.

Some ladies from Belgium, France and Germany came to visit us before Christmas, and three or four of us were invited to talk about the course.



**'Now my English has improved'**

They said they wanted to do the same course in Belgium. In Germany they have kindergartens, and they wanted to know how we found the course. I gave them a copy of one of my assignments as an example.

When I started the course I was worried about my English, but during the course I understood I am good! All of my assignments and homework came back with 'Well done, well done.'

## Interpreters' course

**Martin**

There were so many different nationalities on the interpreters' course - Chinese, Spanish, Swiss, Moroccan, Columbian, Mexican, students from Zaire, Kenya, you name it. With so many different backgrounds we learned from each other, actually stimulated each other, grew as a group.

There were some cultural differences: for example, the way people speak, maybe a different tone or different accent, and you think they are quite offensive, but when you ask them, you understand that they did not mean to be rude. It is just that their facial expression or body language is different in their culture. The bad side is that you need time to adapt to it, but the good side is that you learn from each other - you learn about all these different nationalities and you don't even need to leave the country!

The course was very comprehensive; we learned all about the UK systems: educational, legal, benefits, social welfare, immigration, etc. There was a lot of role-play so we gained experience, we had a lot of outside speakers from different fields. We discussed how far background knowledge is useful when interpreting; for example if an asylum seeker comes to the UK after being tortured in his country, how it helps if the interpreter has had some counselling experience. We also did a unit on job search. I was very lucky, I got through every single unit out of the sixteen.

My only criticism is that in my opinion we did not have quite enough outside work experience. I did some voluntary interpreting, but this wasn't organised by the course; I was asked by my previous contacts.

The course was well attended. There were 22 to start with, and only one person dropped out through personal circumstances. My counselling course, too, lost only one person out of twelve.

I really enjoyed both courses, I've got some good memories, I made some friends. About 16 people from the interpreting course have got together twice since the course ended.

**Blanca**

I was nervous about meeting the other people on the interpreters' course because maybe they would speak English better than me and they wouldn't understand me! But as the day went on I felt happy because they were a very nice group.

I did two work placements in Lambeth, and at the same time I helped friends with social security and housing, etc. There was Guided Study available, but I tended to use Croydon Library more because you had to find out about benefits, for example, and pick up leaflets. That's what I liked about the course, they didn't give you everything in your hand, you had to look for yourself. Another thing we had to do was make a glossary of words for topics like health or social security, collecting the words we didn't know.

The only thing that sometimes frustrated me was that the visiting speakers were not always well prepared. We don't expect everyone to know everything, but if people come to talk to you they should think about what they know and what they can give the students.

The course helped with the psychology of interpreting - how to manage the situation if the service-provider doesn't want to help your client. These techniques have been useful for me, too, when I've found myself in that situation!

During the course, though, I suffered from depression. This was because the situation of the people I was helping was so similar to mine that I couldn't switch off, I couldn't separate my personal life from my professional skills. However, I had counselling and that helped me a lot.

I'd like to say thank you to the course organisers, the tutors, the people I studied with, I call them friends. The course was a really nice time and opened a door for everybody.

**'You could learn so much by interacting with people'**

**Juvelina**

My first day on the interpreters' course was great. Cristina welcomed us well, she was kind, professional, organised, and a very good teacher. From the beginning to the end I was really enthusiastic.

The course was divided into three parts. For the first part we worked a lot with Cristina and Candida to learn about interpreting and advocacy skills and techniques. We did interpreting role-plays using fellow students. We did presentations and worked a lot in a group. The group was really well settled together by Christmas.

**'They didn't give you everything in your hand, you had to look for it yourself'**



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In the second part we had lots of guest speakers from different agencies. We also had training sessions at the Home Office and Mayday Hospital.

The third part involved teamwork projects, work placements (mine was with START in Lambeth), and training in jobsearch skills. Cheryl and Tessa taught us about CVs and application forms and prepared us for job interviews. They organised simulated interviews with real potential employers. After that I felt really well prepared. I hope they keep doing the same for students in coming years. My interviewer was from Merton Translation Service, and later he offered me my first paid interpreting job.

One of the things I really liked about the course was the fact that all the skills we learned were transferable, so we could also look for work in other fields. At the moment I am working as a volunteer for the Refugee Project, doing office work as well as some interpreting.

The group was very mixed - 21 students and 17 nationalities - but we all got on well, helped each other and made friends. We did things together like dinner at a Mexican restaurant, parties, and even a trip to France. Sharing so many differences together was a real 'fiesta.'

**'She found something to make my assignments more interesting'**

Another thing I liked was that you could learn so much not only from the classes but also by interacting with people. Teachers and guest speakers always welcomed questions and answered them even during the break. Mick, the vocational training co-ordinator, introduced us to the Internet and encouraged us to participate in a European students' Internet magazine.

I was pleasantly surprised to learn that our teacher, Candida, was herself a student on this course only a few years ago and she is so good. That was a good sign.

The course provided a maximum of 16 credits. I got ten; it was difficult to get more, bringing up a young child at the same time. I was also doing a course in public speaking, and unfortunately it was on the same days as the interpreters' course... so it was very, very hectic.

With a small child it was difficult to write reports and essays because you needed lots of time and concentration. I was feeling really bad about that so I spoke to Cristina. After that I felt relieved. Cristina really loves people and knows how to listen.

At the end of the course we had a celebration and received our certificates. I was invited to give a speech. I was very nervous because it was in front of the Mayor of Croydon, the Head of CETS, and guests visiting from Greece as part of the Transnational Exchange programme, but I did it.

## Bilingual Assistants' course

**Satinder**

I had very mixed feelings about what kind of group I'd be in, but the tutor, Janet, made everything so easy for us; in a second we were just like a family. We still meet and keep in touch.

Janet was a very good listener, she didn't mind whatever you asked her, she always supported you, she'd go to the extreme *end* to help you, and the other students were supportive too. I remember the second assignment we did, my friend finished first, and I said 'It's a long time to the deadline. If you take your time you can come out with a very good assignment,' and she said, 'No, I'd better get my information down,' so I looked through it and said 'It would be really nice if you put in some pictures' and she accepted that and did it. And sometimes she found something to make my assignments more colourful or impressive, and that's how we worked; it wasn't a competition, with us saying 'If I tell her she might get good marks.'
Very friendly it was, we had two parties, one at Christmas and one when Janet left.

**'Guided Study was a great help'**

When the second teacher took over she tried her best. There were some things, like our school placements, that she wasn't aware of. We were placed in different schools according to our first language, and it had been hard for Janet to find suitable schools. She knew who was coping with which child, who was in which school, but the next tutor had a bit of difficulty. The placements were mostly one full day a week throughout the twenty weeks of the course. Some of my friends couldn't find a suitable child in the placement; maybe the child was the eldest in an Asian family and fluent in English, although he was classed as bilingual, and my friends felt 'This child doesn't need me.' The child I was looking after was in Year Six, ready to go to secondary school and fluent in English. But she was the only Asian girl in the school and very low in confidence so when I went she used to feel somebody was there to protect her, and afterwards the headteacher told me 'Oh, you've done so well, she's come out of her shell, she mixes with other children,' so I did help her.

**Maria**
I wasn't nervous on the course. I threw myself into it. The teacher said I put too much energy into it. I spent a whole weekend once making a bilingual dictionary, cutting out pictures, drawing things, putting this word in Spanish, that in English, going to the library and looking at all the bilingual books. Janet was a very good teacher, she gave everyone praise and special attention, and sometimes she'd give you a private tutorial to say 'I think that idea is not very clear.'

Janet established a rapport with us the first day, she reassured me about my pronunciation, she said that in her country, South Africa, the pronunciation is like a whistle! 'Never mind,' she said, 'you will be better with time, I would worry more about your writing, maybe.'

She was very supportive about our work placements, she'd always ask 'How was the class, what did you learn?' She knew what we were all doing. We missed her a lot when she left.

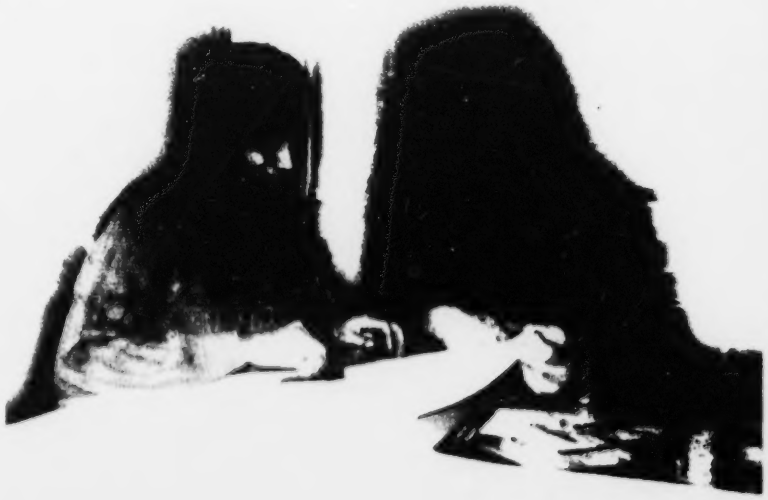
All the students helped each other. They'd say 'I have an idea for your project' or 'I found this in the newspaper for your assignment.'

The Guided Study was a great help, and the teachers were kind; sometimes they'd say 'I can spare you half an hour after Guided Study' because I was insisting that I needed something explained. I got the CLAIT certificate in using computers at the same time.

## Business Start-up course

**Amal**
I started my business study course last year. All the people on the course were very clever and had a much higher level of English than I had. I thought, how can I sit with these people? Their reading is good, their writing is good, they speak well, there's just me in the middle who doesn't know anything! I asked the teacher's advice and she said she thought it was too hard for me and advised me to give up. She was right, because everybody else knew what they were doing and I was like a blind person, but I told her 'I know I probably won't pass everything, but I would like to stay because I want to learn what to do, so that I'll know next time I do the course.' She agreed, and I stayed, and gradually I found myself making more and more progress - the teachers helped a lot - and when they told me I'd passed and done everything fine, you don't know how I felt! I felt as if I'd got a university degree!

**'She gave everyone praise and special attention'**



The teachers were so helpful. One of them even came with me to the Council and talked to them about the coffee shop I wanted to open. However, they still said 'No.' They said the people on the estate didn't want a coffee-shop, but I had been round knocking on doors and everybody signed to say they did want one. My teacher didn't speak to the person at the top who had the final say. Maybe she didn't have full confidence in me and that's why she didn't push.

I got a lot of individual support from the teachers. I went to Guided Study as well, but when you sit down and read by yourself you get bored because nobody is with you to 'make you hot,' so you feel sleepy! Some of the other students did not come every time. I think they had already started businesses and had to sort out problems. Me, I didn't miss one day! I was already struggling, you know, I couldn't be absent on top of that!

### Good Practice

- ★ **Negotiate any changes in programme with the trainees so they can progress when they feel ready**
- ★ **Qualifications are very important to adults, but don't underestimate how nervous they can feel before an exam**
- ★ **Ensure trainees understand the currency of the qualification in the workplace**
- ★ **Ensure that information on further training is built in as a part of the course and recognise that trainees need a lot of support to apply all this information to themselves**
- ★ **Work placements may be a nightmare to arrange but they are the most important part of the course for many trainees and can be crucial in helping them find work afterwards**
- ★ **Language support is essential - ideally both as part of the course and supplemented by other modes of delivery such as open learning**
- ★ **Open learning needs to be carefully structured so trainees have a clear action plan which is regularly monitored**
- ★ **Childcare is vital to enable some students to complete a course**
- ★ **Give lots of support to overcome barriers and build up confidence to apply for jobs to ensure a positive approach**
- ★ **Good relationships between teacher and trainee are essential - explain as many times as the trainee wants. Encourage trainees to develop the confidence to raise any problems openly**
- ★ **Motivate trainees to work at home as this can substantially speed their progress**
- ★ **Be careful not to treat adults lacking basic skills as children and lower their self esteem**
- ★ **Adults have different reasons for taking courses and different approaches to learning - their differences should be respected**
- ★ **Encourage adults to progress step by step but don't push them**
- ★ **Ensure that action is taken on complaints**
- ★ **Evaluate with trainees to find out what they have learnt and their views on classes**
- ★ **Encourage trainees to work together to share ideas on assignments**
- ★ **Encourage adults to share experiences and discuss cultural differences**
- ★ **Provide opportunities to develop independent learning strategies**

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# Moving On

## Trainees describe what they went on to do after their course

### Catering and Computer courses

**Caroline**

I heard there was going to be a position in the office here so I did lots of background work. There was an advertisement in the paper and I applied and filled in the application form, then bit my nails for two weeks. At my interview we had to do a test. Luckily it was tables, and I'd just done them for my CLAIT certificate. I was interviewed by three people and it was nerve-wracking. They offered me a glass of water, but I thought if I take that glass of water it's going to go everywhere. So I just sat there with a dry mouth.

After the interview I went back to my voluntary work. Later they called me and said I'd got the job. I've been here working full-time since August last year. We finish at 4.30pm and my daughter's old enough now to let herself in after school. I've learnt so much: how to use the database, filing, faxing, I do the food accounts and childcare payments, and last year I even helped to complete our final funding claim. I've been involved in a visit to Croydon by our Irish partners and made real friends.

I want to build up my computing skills and do the iBT2 certificate, but because I work in the day I have to find something in the evening. I've applied to do Visual Basics and I'm hoping I'll get a place.

I've grown up a lot since I've been here. I take more responsibility. Before I used to say 'It's not my fault, it's someone else's,' but now I'll own up if I've done something wrong. I've become a bit of a perfectionist. A lot of my friends and family, even my daughter, say how I've changed. We do a lot more together now.

**Steve**

I did Jobsearch on the course; we made phone calls about jobs and had mock interviews here. One of the tutors interviewed us. I didn't feel nervous because I know them all here. It's not like a real interview.

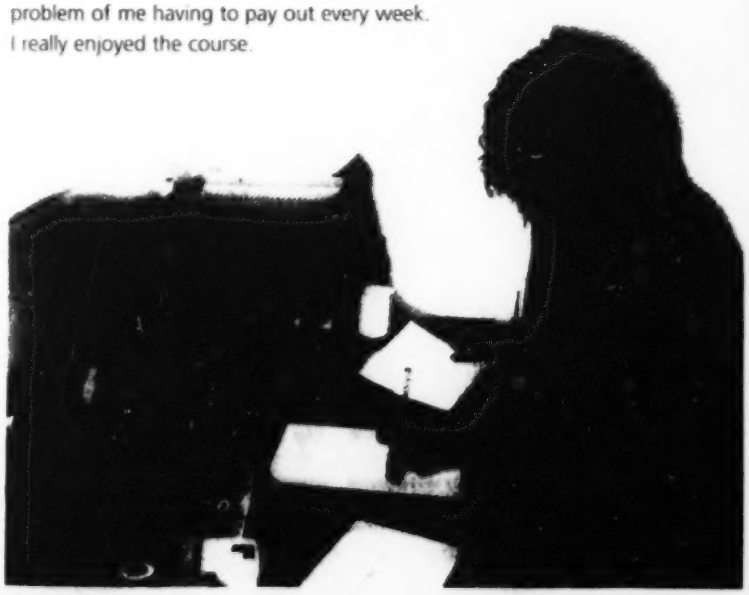
I was looking out for jobs. I was here for 12 weeks and got the certificates, then before I left I saw an advertisement in the paper. I filled in the application myself and the interview was all right. Now I'm working in an old people's home in South Croydon. I cook for about 50 people. I work from seven in the morning to seven in the evening but I have two days off a week. There are two other people in the morning, but I am alone in the afternoon, scrubbing the walls and everything. I think the qualifications helped me to get the job.

I was thinking about getting an NVQ (National Vocational Qualification) but it costs so much to do it yourself - about £150 a term - that's in the evening. I've been looking for a job that will send me to College but it's not easy at my age. I'm nearly 40 now, and most employers would prefer to train a younger person.

**Anne**

I finished the course and six of us went on to Croydon College. I did the NVQ in Catering Level 2 and the GNVQ, but I didn't want to go on to Level 3 which is Management. I finished Level 2 and did Vegetarian Cookery and two hygiene courses. I've crammed a lot in. I had my fees paid and got some money for equipment. I have a vegetarian friend and she used to buy the ingredients and then I'd give her the food I cooked, so that solved the problem of me having to pay out every week. I really enjoyed the course.

**'I've been here working full-time since August last year'**



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Now I'm working part-time in a nursing home. I cook for about 30 people there at the weekends. If I hadn't done the course I'd still be stuck at home trying to decide what to do.

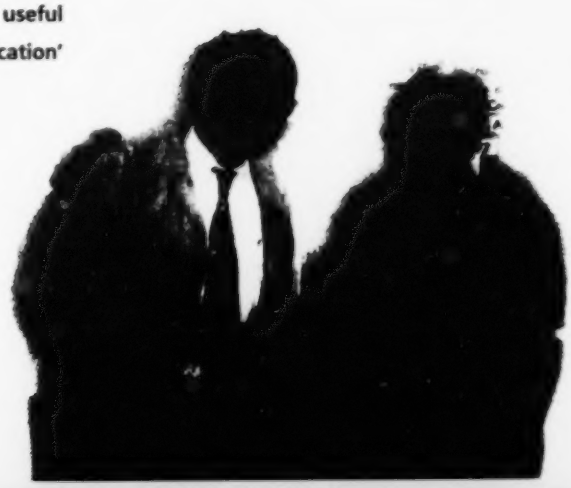
**Emma**

I did get my diploma and I got help to find a job. Now I'm working part-time in two crèches where the English classes are. I've got self-confidence. Now I know what I'm doing, how to work in a team. People have different opinions and we have to work with parents - some are a bit difficult. I feel totally different from what I did at the beginning of the course. Now I can do what I want and decide what is right and wrong and make my own decisions.

Some students are lazy and don't come to school regularly or come late. This makes it very difficult for the others and then it takes a long time for them to learn English. They think they can't get a job or a qualification, and they don't understand that it helps us to do voluntary work. I used to tell them they must work harder.

In my country, Burma, many people don't have any education but here there are so many opportunities. I really value education and I know I've only just made a start. I've had training in my job - we have to go to training sessions - but I still need to learn more, to get more experience and improve my English. I'm going to start NVQ Level 3 in Childcare at Croydon College - there are four of us from the course who are going to do it. But the fees are expensive. We're not sure we can manage because we don't earn very much, and it means going out in the evening. But I want to do it.

**'My course has been a useful qualification'**



## Childcare course

**Annmarie**

I've got a lot going on at the moment. I'm getting experience in the telecentre and I'm working as a volunteer teacher and that's really positive, watching other people succeed. I can say, 'I've been here before, I know what you're finding difficult.'

I'm doing Stage 1 of the Cert Ed (Certificate in Education) and after that I want to go on to Stage 2 at Croydon College - I've applied for a grant. I definitely wasn't thinking of teaching when I started but it's come on since. I had the computer at home and started to explore it with my children. 'Mum, how do you do that?' I could show them and I didn't have to get them to show me. Now I can help them with their homework and assist students who are as nervous as I was when I started. I can say it does get better. The fact that you come through the door and want to learn is the most important step. It was such a pleasure this week to see the students coming back for the second time. I'm looking forward to seeing them pass CLAIT and me being able to move on to Stage 2 of the Cert Ed and then find something I enjoy that fits in with my family.

I'm still learning new things. I've just started a new course in office administration covering faxing and photocopying; we'll get the NVQ in Administration. It's all these bits and pieces that bring it all together. It's not just using the computer, it's having a broader aspect, like being confident in using office equipment and teaching aids and being confident in oneself.

**Zuzi**

When I finished I said 'I'll miss this course' and Ellen and Dawn said 'Try another one, higher than this one!' I asked which, and they suggested NVQ Level 3 in Childcare at Croydon College. The course is hard, but I've got a very good assessor who comes to my nursery to watch me working with children, and once a month she comes to my house if I need it, say if I've finished a unit, and we talk together. I started this course at the end of September and I've already finished four units - there are 18 altogether. It's a two year course, but my assessor said 'Zuzi, if you go this fast you can finish early!'

**'Mock interviews can help, preferably with someone unknown'**

I want to finish early because I'll get double the pay. At the moment I'm working at a nursery in Morden. I got the job three weeks after I finished the course, and I'm working with a lady who has an NNEB. She gets twice what I do just because of her qualification, and she doesn't do more than I do. If I hadn't done this course I wouldn't have been accepted on Level 3; they warned me at the interview that they didn't think I would be able to cope with the course if I hadn't done Level 1 or 2. Also, many of the Level 3 units are linked to Level 2 ones.

For my job in Morden I have to get up at 5.30 in the morning and catch two buses, but I've never been late all the time I've been employed there. I work three days a week (two four-hour days and one five-hour one) and it's hard. But now I think I've found something at a nursery near my house; I just need to cross the road. I'll know in a couple of weeks whether I've got it.

## Interpreters' course

**Martin**

Before the end of the course I registered with some of the London boroughs as an interpreter, and now and again I get odd freelance jobs, but I cannot survive on that, so I have started my own estate agency, using my home as an office. I'm starting letting and management and also helping people sell properties. (The business start-up course I did in 1995 helped. It all helps.) In order to make your own living, and not to claim benefit, you have to work hard. Claiming family credit is not my line!

With interpreting, it's hard to get a foot in with the boroughs, they have people working for them and it's only if their own interpreter can't make it that I get asked as a replacement. But I think, yes, with these occasional jobs my course has been a useful qualification, I wouldn't have got them without it. The course helped me tremendously, you become a good professional rather than a lousy cowboy!

However, I feel that the diploma is not sufficiently recognised in the outside world. You don't need qualifications to set up as an interpreter or a counsellor, anybody can, and I wonder what advantage the diploma gives you in the job market. For example, if I had spent the year doing interpreting jobs instead of the course, would I be better off? But I don't dare ask this question, because Cristina would squeeze my neck!

**Blanca**

I haven't worked since finishing the course, because of my immigration situation. The Home Office won't let me do any work, paid or unpaid. In October I started studying for Cambridge Proficiency at Croydon College but it was only two hours a week and I left in November. I'd started the course two months late because of personal problems and I couldn't catch up, so I decided to cut my losses. So I carry on helping friends, learning English at the library and from television, trying to make myself busy until a better time comes. My counselling has helped me to accept my situation.

My boyfriend, who speaks Arabic, is doing the interpreters' course now because I recommended it, and he says it's very helpful.

**'It's having a broader aspect, like being confident in using office equipment'**

**Juvelina**

My problem now I've finished the course is still childcare. I don't have anyone I can ask quickly to look after my daughter, so if I'm asked to do an interpreting job tomorrow I can't manage.

Merton Translation Service ring me often. So do other organisations, because my name is on a list which Cristina circulated. I haven't applied anywhere else because of this childcare problem. But last autumn I did a few courses, such as counselling, a parenting course, yoga, and a GCSE in psychology.

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I'd like a second child, and then to start work when they're at school, so my plan now is to improve my English as much as I can, and do Cambridge Proficiency.

I wouldn't have got the freelance interpreting jobs without doing the course, because I wouldn't have had the confidence to work at a professional level.

The course was even more than I expected; it was really good. I enjoyed it from beginning to end.

**'I'm still working as a volunteer in the English classes'**

## Bilingual assistants' course

**Satinder**

I finished the bilingual assistants' course last year. The course made a great difference to my life, because halfway through they advertised some classroom assistant vacancies, including some for bilingual assistants, and I got the job of classroom assistant at my children's school.

The Head let me work flexible hours until I finished the course. And a week after I started I got selected for the job of bilingual assistant at another school! Luckily the job didn't start till I'd finished the course. Now I spend my mornings at one school and three afternoons at the other. At my children's school they said 'What are you doing the other afternoons?' so I said 'I'm free' so they said 'We need you here, do you mind doing extra hours for us?' So now suddenly I've got busy!

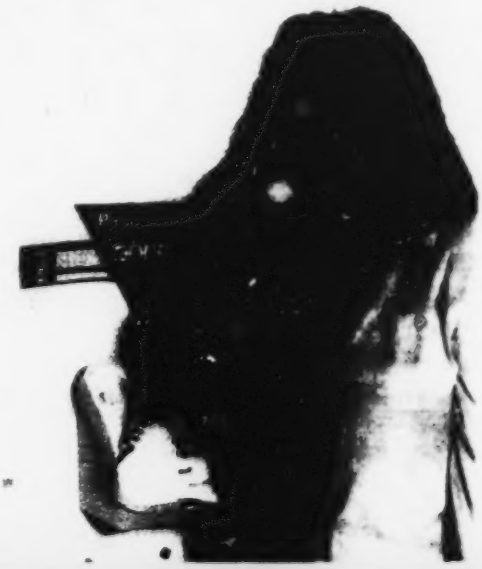
Recently I heard about some in-service courses for bilingual assistants because people say, 'You've got a degree, why don't you go for further studies so you can become a full-time teacher?' but I say 'No, I don't want such a responsible job now.' My eldest daughter is 16, doing her GCSEs, so I work with her at home. She needs me all the time, and also I live in a joint family and look after my parents-in-law, so it's very hard. If you go on a postgraduate course you're busy with assignments.

I'm very glad I did the course, because apart from anything else I got very good references from my tutor and the class teacher in my work placement, so that really helped me. If I hadn't done the course there wouldn't have been anyone who knew my professional side - so that was the bargain for me!

**Maria**

Since doing the bilingual assistants' course I've completed a City and Guilds course in teaching language to adults at Kensington and Chelsea College. I'm also doing the Advanced Cambridge Certificate at Croydon College and I hope to do Proficiency next year. I'm still working as a volunteer in the English classes at South Norwood too.

I was lucky to get on the City and Guilds course because it was full. On Tuesday of the week Diana died I insisted on having an interview with the adviser at Kensington College, and in the end she told me 'OK, you can apply for the course and by the way, I'm the teacher!' And on the Thursday she rang up at ten o'clock at night and said 'I'm thinking I'll give you a chance, I'll take the risk!' and I said 'You make me very happy!'



**'I'll never stop until I speak proper English'**

The level of the course was very high, there were people who spoke five languages and worked as tourist travel guides, and there I was with just my bilingual assistants' course! I really don't think they would have accepted me without it, because it was the only teaching qualification I had.

## Business Start-up course

**Amal**

I finished last year. The good thing about the business course is that it teaches you to plan. The bad thing is that it is scary! If you borrow money from the bank to start a business, I think you can't sleep until you pay it back, can you? If you lose it they come and take everything in your house, whatever you've got, it's like you're in the middle of a fire - no, the sea, and you can't swim! The course doesn't tell you how to survive if that happens. I think they should be more open with us about the risks. Maybe they don't want to frighten people.

Now I am doing classes to improve my English. I'll never stop until I speak proper English. My problem is reading, writing and pronunciation. The course is fine, but whether it's my fault or the teacher's, I find I'm not getting on. I think it would help if we had one book for reading and writing which we worked through steadily, until we understood it completely - even if it took a whole year - and then moved on to another book. But every day we get a different book, there are too many papers. And I think tests would help, more tests.

I am still trying to persuade the Council to let me open a coffee shop. I am trying to go to the top Councillor, I haven't given up.

### Good Practice

- ★ **Give opportunities for progression within the project and also support with jobsearch**
- ★ **Ensure trainees are aware of opportunities to carry on learning outside the project and that learning is a life-long process**
- ★ **Job interviews are terrifying. Mock interviews can help, preferably with someone unknown**
- ★ **Give support to trainees to apply for further training and grants. Fees are a barrier for many adults**
- ★ **Be aware that lack of support with childcare in employment is a barrier preventing some trainees from gaining employment. Discuss strategies for finding childcare support**
- ★ **Be aware of vulnerable trainees who may not find immediate employment or are perhaps debarred from it, and encourage them to enrol for further training before they finish the course and become depressed**
- ★ **Advertise suitable vacancies during the course and support trainees in applying**
- ★ **Use trainees' skills and understanding to teach others**
- ★ **It takes a lot of hard work and time to develop basic literacy skills, and apparent lack of progress can be discouraging. Frequent encouragement and praise can help. Tests help trainees to measure progress and can be motivating, provided they are not carried out in an intimidating way**
- ★ **Working through one textbook is helpful for many trainees if a suitable book can be found. It can be confusing for trainees to work from lots of papers although arranging papers in order in a file is an important skill to be learnt**
- ★ **Some trainees need to be motivated to develop a positive approach to training. Other trainees can provide positive role models and encouragement**
- ★ **Voluntary work is an important way of getting experience. It is important that trainees understand this - volunteering may be an alien concept in some cultures**
- ★ **Recognise that many trainees do not know what they want to do at the start of training, which can open new horizons for them**

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# Conclusions

**'I was very nervous because it was in front of the Mayor of Croydon... but I did it'**

These two projects have been successful because they provided trainees with more than just a course covering one particular subject.

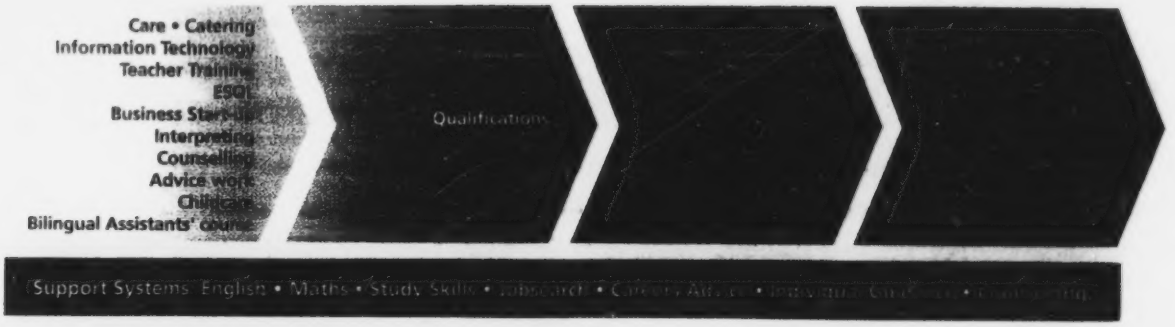
**'I feel totally different... Now I can do what I want and decide what is right and wrong and make my own decisions'**

They provided clear progression routes so that trainees were able to progress both within the project and beyond it. They also provided guidance and support related to the course and on personal issues as well as advice on career opportunities and jobsearch and support to develop English, Maths and study skills. Figure 8 illustrates these progression routes and also the support systems.

We have seen that some trainees succeeded in finding employment; however, there were also many who did not. There are a number of barriers that make it difficult for trainees to get jobs - lack of childcare, immigration regulations that refuse some refugees permission to work, lack of fluency in English, lack of work experience in this country, a highly competitive job market operating according to conventions that are not always understood by those from different cultures.

However, one thing that all the trainees interviewed are clear about is that the courses they have attended have opened up opportunities for them and given them foundations for making choices from a range of options. Even if they do not have a job in the immediate future, they have opportunities for further learning and have also developed the self-confidence to take advantage of these opportunities. As Caroline says, 'It was more than the catering course. It was the way they made me feel, like I was somebody, very positive about myself.' Juvelina, who started the course feeling she was weak in speaking English, developed the confidence to make a speech in front of the Mayor and European visitors. Zuzi, who was also initially worried about her English, concluded, 'I am good,' while Amal, hearing she had passed, felt as if she had graduated from university.

**Figure 8**
**Progression Routes and Support Systems**

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# Recommendations

It is important there should be dedicated provision with clear progression routes to support disadvantaged groups to access further training and employment.This provision must be evaluated regularly to ensure that needs are being met and that funding is being used effectively. It should include services such as individual guidance, careers advice and support with English, Maths and study skills, as well as childcare funding. These support services are as important as the direct training offered.

These two projects were funded by the European Social Fund on a short-term basis but there is a need for longer-term funding guaranteed as part of a local or national strategy, in order to provide stability.

Many women like Juvelina are not able to work because of the difficulty of finding suitable childcare. There is a need for better childcare facilities such as workplace nurseries and also for a system of financial support with childcare for those in low-paid work.

Martin stresses the need for hard work to make a living without claiming benefit. However, some people cannot afford to come off benefit, so will stay unemployed unless there are clear financial incentives to work.

Many asylum seekers like Blanca are prohibited from working by immigration regulations. Because they are refused permission to work they are therefore dependent on state benefits and unable to use the skills they have developed. All asylum seekers should have permission to work as a basic human right.

The importance of lifelong learning is emphasised today but for many adults like Steve who want to continue studying there are financial barriers. More funding should be available for grants for part-time study to enable trainees to progress to mainstream training.

In this publication we have seen how 13 individuals have progressed along the route to work and developed the confidence to make choices about their future. We are very grateful to the European Social Fund and the London Borough of Croydon for their support, without which none of this would have been possible.

**Postscript**

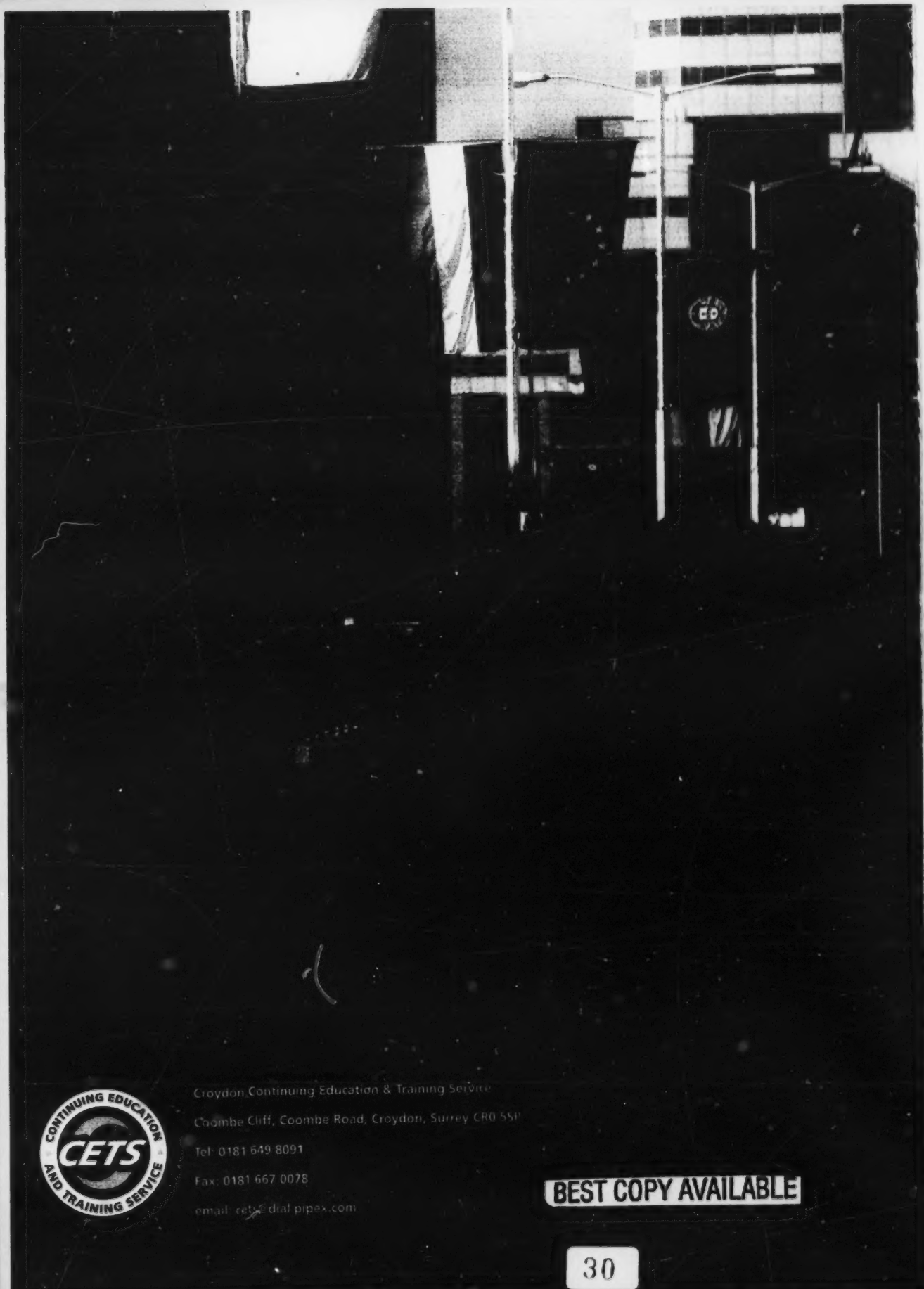
Both projects came to an end in December 1997. The problem with short-term contracts such as these is that they require a huge amount of work to set up and it is heart-breaking if they are not able to continue when the funding comes to an end. One of the challenges facing providers is to find ways of continuing and we are pleased to report that all of the provision described in this publication has been sustained.

CETS was successful in getting funding for another two years from the ESF Community Initiative Programme to develop the NOW Project in New Addington, in particular to develop 'soft' qualitative performance indicators such as ways of measuring increased self-confidence for trainees. It is much easier to measure success through 'hard' quantitative indicators such as counting the number of trainees gaining employment than through less tangible 'soft' factors, such as increased motivation, which have been shown in this publication to be so important for trainees.

The Horizon Project was unsuccessful in its application to the Community Initiative Programme to develop the open learning and guidance services as part of a larger package of vocational training. However, all the courses as well as the support through the Guided Study Centres and advice and guidance on further education and training have continued with funding from the Further Education Funding Council and the London Borough of Croydon.

We are pleased to report that Maria now has a job as a part-time Spanish teacher and Amal has won a regional Award as an outstanding Adult Learner.

**'I think the qualifications helped me get the job'**



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